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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001607

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BROACHES ANTI-US RHETORIC WITH BAYKAL

Classified By: Ambassador James Jeffrey, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶11. (SBU) Summary: The Ambassador met with the Republican People's Party (CHP) Chairman Deniz Baykal on November 5 to confront him about his persistent use of anti-American rhetoric in speeches on otherwise purely internal matters. Baykal ducked and weaved, contending he is often misquoted. Baykal seemed unduly focused on the South Stream pipeline project. On the Democratic Opening, Baykal said CHP has long advocated expanding cultural and personal rights to all Turkish citizens, but is uncomfortable with the state taking an active role in what the private sector should handle. End Summary.

¶12. (C) The Ambassador's main agenda in his meeting with Chairman Baykal was to raise concerns over the use by Turkish politicians, particularly the CHP, of Anti-American rhetoric in their political speeches. Noting that Turkish politicians have every right to criticize American actions, particularly in the field of foreign policy, the Ambassador lamented the perpetuation of falsehoods about the US and persistent criticism of U.S. faults without also occasional praise of the positive aspects of the U.S.-Turkey relationship. His primary example was the oft-repeated claim that the U.S. supports the PKK, or that its actions reveal a tacit support for the PKK, despite the fact that the US has engaged on multiple fronts -- through military action, diplomacy, and coordinating international legal processes -- to bring the PKK to its weakest ever condition. He also noted the tendency of opposition party members to reinforce the belief among the electorate that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) Government's "Democratic Initiative," designed to address the grievances of Turkey's ethnic and religious minorities by removing impediments to personal expression, was crafted by the U.S. and forced upon an unwilling Turkish government.

¶13. (C) Baykal's defense was predictably lame: he contested our specific statements ("I never said that the US supports the PKK; I said that the U.S. is not doing enough to eliminate the PKK") without addressing the overall point that the Turkish citizenry is not hearing enough about the positive role the U.S. played and continues to play for Turkey.

¶14. (C) The Ambassador and Baykal discussed a range of other issues. Baykal was curious about the U.S. position on the South Stream petroleum pipeline, expressing concern that the Turkish government was coddling Russia and undermining Ukraine. Ambassador explained that the U.S. does not believe that South Stream is an economically viable alternative to Nabucco, but that arguing strongly against South Stream would

only serve to reinforce Russia's political will to see it to fruition and to coerce other countries to participate in it. Absent a change in the economic situation, he said, the U.S. will continue to watch it carefully.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador acknowledged that Turkey and the U.S. are working together closely to convince Iran to cooperate with the IAEA, even if not in full understanding with each other. He pointed out to Baykal that the comments that PM Erdogan is making today are milder than those he had been making two weeks ago, and that both President Gul and FM Davutoglu are much closer to the U.S. position in their public statements than is Erdogan. The Ambassador also expressed U.S. support for the concept of the government's proposed Democratic Opening, noting that the U.S. has no business in recommending or supporting individual elements of such a project, but will be supportive of any approach that can produce stronger democracy and greater harmony in Turkey.

Baykal noted the CHP has argued in favor of expanding cultural and personal rights to all Turkish citizens for over a decade, but his party is uncomfortable with the state taking an active role in what should be handled by the private sector. He argued, as an example, that the state opening a Kurdish language TV station (TRT 6), only serves to underline the differences among people; instead, private institutions should have been given the right to broadcast in Kurdish instead.

¶6. (C) Comment: We felt it necessary to remind the opposition leader that his anti-US rhetoric is not without cost to the US-Turkey relationship. Without countervailing

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positive reinforcement of the benefits of U.S. friendship, our image among Turks tends to drift in a negative direction.

Baykal hears his own electoral drummer. And the current crop of prominent Turkish leaders (President Gul excepted) is too willing to mortgage long-term strategic interests in a pursuit of short-term tactical gains. End comment.

JEFFREY

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